

Workforce Observations

For The Wisconsin River Valley WDA

September 2001



August is the last month of summer, the last of a triad beginning with June and July. In terms of employment, the highest job levels of the year are seen in these months, when seasonal influences on the business world in Wisconsin and the region mean more jobs in response to demands on every industrial sector. At least, that is the standard pattern.

There have been years when the highest job numbers could be seen in August and even September, but that does not appear to be the case in 2001. In fact, the employment picture in the most recent month (August) can only be described as mediocre. This is not only true compared to the previous month, but to the same period of 12 months ago, as well. When looked at from the standpoint of seasonal

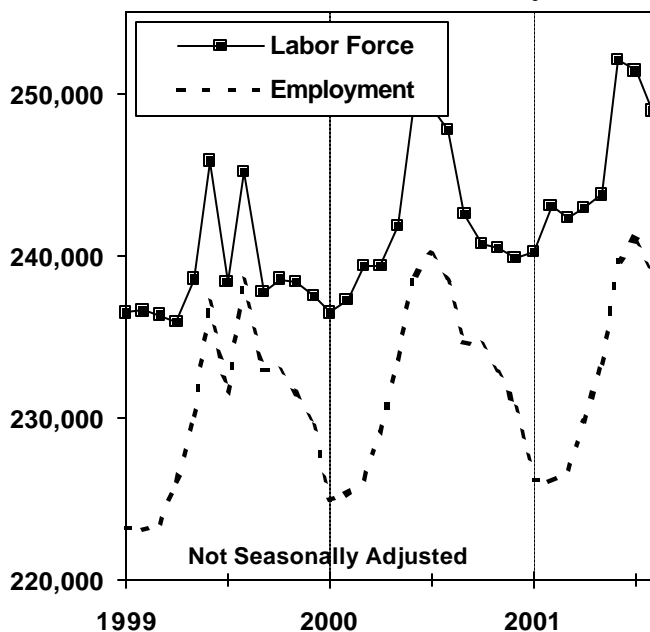
With that in mind, it might be instructive to look beyond the Upper Wisconsin River Valley at the wider state picture, and to what is happening in other areas.

Of all jobs in the labor force statewide, about 20 percent are in manufacturing. In the river Valley, this percent is slightly higher, at just over 22 percent in the most recent month. (It is true that a large amount of this Valley manufacturing activity is concentrated in the Core County area of Marathon, Portage, and Wood, but such important elements of our manufacturing picture as paper making can my found in the northern areas, as well.) This is much higher than the national average of about 12 or 13 percent, and it means that any serious falloff in orders or declines in demand beyond our borders is going to mean trouble for the state and the Valley. In Wisconsin, manufacturing has lost about 20,000 jobs since January, and we are nearing the end of the summer job season. In the River Valley, nearly 1,000 manufacturing jobs have actually been added since the first of the year, but in a field of about 45,000, this is not exactly robust or a sign for celebration.

In the second quarter of this year, there were declines in the goods producing sector generally, including construction. Building activity in the Valley and all over the state has been formerly described by the more enthusiastic as "boom times", but exaggeration aside, we are definitely seeing a falloff in this sector. (A recent report by the Central Wisconsin Economic Research Bureau indicates a second quarter decline in permits issued and new home value, as well.) This is going to have an impact on the building component manufactures of the area, from the door and windows people, structural steel makers, and the modular and mobile home manufacturers. Also effected will be large hardware and lumber retailers, especially the building "super stores" that have increased in recent years.

Note – Although we are dealing here with labor market statistics from the month of August, it goes without saying that the NYC tragedy throws nearly everything economic into a cocked hat. Projections are nearly impossible, but it is a sure bet that the recent events can only prolong and exaggerate current problems in the general economy, which of course includes the Wisconsin River Valley.

**Civilian Labor Force
Wisconsin River Valley**



job fluctuation, it would appear that we are already in the rather late fall, but the leaves are definitely still green. In fact, the first serious frost of the year has yet to arrive. What, then, is the reason for this chill we feel when we take a close look at the most recent employment statistics for the River Valley?

It is no secret that these last few years have been very good economically, with record low rates of unemployment nearly everywhere. Job levels have been so high for so long that it had begun to look like good times were here to stay. So, the sluggish conditions of these last 2-3 months have been a bit of a shock, and reason for some concern.

Industry Thumbnails—

Considering the whole district, manufacturing employment levels declined in the most recent month by a rather small number (about 1,500) compared to both July and the same period of 12 months ago. The biggest loser (see page 2)

was durable goods manufacturing. Nondurable goods manufacturing also went down a bit, which may have been due to some of the problems in paper in the Valley, but we may see an increase in this sector next month as food and related production gains some jobs due to the fall potato and vegetable harvests.

Most spud growers in the Golden Sands area of Portage and other

counties have been digging for some weeks now, and warehouses all over the area are filling rapidly. Digging tends to start somewhat earlier further north in places like Langlade County, not only because of crop maturity, but the threat of frost, the main seasonal enemy of the potato plant.

There was almost no change in trade employment levels, and this

was the case all summer. Normally, one would expect to see nice job gains in trade as the weather gets warmer, but this year has only been so-so throughout the area. It is too early to tell yet what kind of year we had on the tourist front in the northern counties, but preliminary reports are good so far. In other words, it hasn't exactly been a boom year, but few are complaining.

For The Month Of August	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Labor Force	9,096	4,955	9,711	15,390	77,253	22,533	38,210	12,201	40,965	230,314
Employed	8,821	4,685	9,180	14,697	74,806	21,720	36,733	11,837	39,383	221,862
Unemployed	275	270	531	693	2,447	813	1,477	364	1,582	8,452
Unemployment rate(%)	3.0	5.4	5.5	4.5	3.2	3.6	3.9	3.0	3.9	3.7%
Total, all industries**	4,194	3,198	7,909	12,375	70,765	19,028	32,919	9,160	44,766	204,314
Construction & Mining	196	134	495	638	3,597	1,480	1,392	1,099	2,042	11,073
Manufacturing	399	508	1,704	4,199	19,200	2,045	6,886	539	10,199	45,679
Transportation & Util.	183	198	352	405	3,974	667	1,924	254	3,202	11,159
Wholesale Trade	113	45	477	423	5,196	392	1,630	144	1,429	9,849
Retail Trade	931	533	1,911	2,412	12,444	5,517	5,419	2,542	8,078	39,787
FIRE	102	99	263	256	4,836	469	3,733	319	924	11,001
Services	1,132	525	1,664	1,923	14,447	6,011	7,450	2,533	14,444	50,129
Government	1,138	1,156	1,043	2,119	7,071	2,447	4,485	1,730	4,448	25,637
Change from previous mo.	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Civilian Labor Force*	521	325	-75	518	169	409	-30	318	-148	2,007
Employed	543	311	39	497	269	573	135	205	16	2,588
Unemployed	-22	14	-114	21	-100	-164	-165	113	-164	-581
Unemployment rate(%)	-0.5	-0.1	-1.1	0.0	-0.1	-0.8	-0.4	0.9	-0.3	0.0
Total, all industries**	-93	-22	-22	-29	648	-289	109	-32	40	310
Construction & Mining	-3	-8	-8	7	-6	-17	-28	0	-9	-72
Manufacturing	-42	-68	-68	13	-35	-177	-16	-12	-65	-470
Transportation & Util.	-1	8	8	-8	30	23	8	23	20	111
Wholesale Trade	-7	1	1	-3	9	2	-35	0	2	-30
Retail Trade	-7	35	35	-2	155	23	32	-33	-1	237
FIRE	-2	3	3	-3	-40	-2	-18	-4	-6	-69
Services	-13	25	25	-19	431	-21	49	-3	108	582
Government	-18	-18	-18	-14	104	-120	117	-3	-9	21
Change from year ago	Adams	Forest	Lang.	Lincoln	Mara.	Oneida	Portage	Vilas	Wood	Region
Civilian Labor Force*	78	144	195	237	699	207	-269	169	-296	1,164
Employed	51	99	163	118	449	177	-143	96	219	1,229
Unemployed	27	45	32	119	250	30	-126	73	-515	-65
Unemployment rate(%)	0.2	0.7	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.1	-0.3	0.6	-1.2	0.0
Total, all industries**	-69	31	-78	-327	888	-156	-472	267	-91	-8
Construction & Mining	11	29	-39	15	139	89	-6	94	46	377
Manufacturing	-46	5	-54	-255	-557	-129	-324	57	-229	-1,533
Transportation & Util.	8	-6	-9	-39	224	-27	106	14	-2	270
Wholesale Trade	12	1	-33	17	139	-16	-13	-2	-95	10
Retail Trade	0	27	33	-29	279	243	-571	52	209	243
FIRE	5	3	19	-52	3	-16	137	2	-13	89
Services	-25	37	54	16	403	-322	383	83	405	1,034
Government	-35	-65	-48	-1	258	23	-185	-33	-412	-498

* Includes participants residing in area. ** Includes employment with employers located in area. Estimates are NOT seasonally adjusted. Current month estimates are preliminary. Totals may not add due to rounding. Calculations based on unrounded numbers.

Look for the most current Labor Market Information at: WWW.DWD.STATE.WI.US/LMI

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